

{ INDEPENDENT, TOGETHER. THE ALLIANCE + BUYING GROUP MAGAZINE FOR ECPs. }

# THE OD CONNECTION

June 2020

PentaVision



Inside  
Reopening  
at One  
Pittsburgh  
Practice



A Feel-Good  
Story from  
Tanzania

## STRONGER TOGETHER.

AMID THE COVID-19 CRISIS, PRACTICES HAVE INCREASINGLY TURNED TO THEIR OPTOMETRIC ALLIANCES AND BUYING GROUPS FOR GUIDANCE, STRATEGIES, TOOLS, AND PURE HELP. LEARN 6 WAYS TO TAP INTO THIS COLLECTIVE RESOURCE.

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Justin L. Manning, O.D., MPH, FAAO, of Healthy Eyes Advantage shares how the company's facing the future and supporting its members amid Covid-19



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### STAY INFORMED

To stay up to date on happenings for buying groups and alliances, follow [@TheODConnection](https://www.facebook.com/TheODConnection) on Facebook.



editor's letter



# Managing the Crisis



**IN THIS ISSUE**

*In our third special issue of The OD Connection, we focus on crisis management via resources offered by optometric alliances and buying groups.*

Welcome to the third issue of our new Pen-taVision publication—**The OD Connection**—which delivers critical, timely information and fresh ideas on the optometric alliance and buying group arena to help independent eye-care professionals be successful in today's uniquely competitive marketplace.

The focus of this issue is "Crisis Management" in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the recent *Eyecare Business Covid-19 + ECPs Focus Group Study Wave #4*, a full 75% of

respondents say that they are expecting a "significant financial impact" to their business from the coronavirus crisis. An additional 21% say that they are expecting to experience "some financial impact."

With nearly 100% of eyecare professionals indicating today that their business is going to be impacted by the fallout from the pandemic, many are turning to trusted resources—including their own O.D. alliances and buying groups—for support and guidance.

In our cover feature—**Crisis Management, starting on page 6**—we sit down with Justin L. Manning, O.D., MPH, FAAO, of Healthy Eyes Advantage to learn about six coping techniques and strategies to help navigate today's new landscape.

One key take-away? Accept the certainty of fear. "One of the most important psychological steps one can take during tough times like these is what's called 'fear setting,'" says Dr. Manning, referring to author and podcast host Tim Ferriss' system that contrasts fear setting to goal

setting, and stresses the importance of defining not just your goals, but your fears.

In our **Starting Block department on page 10**, we step inside one reopening Pittsburgh practice with Frank Aulicino, O.D. And, in our **To the Point section on page 5**, we report on a feel-good story from Africa, where Moes Nasser, O.D., Vision Source, and Optometry Giving Sight are teaming up to open up two optometric clinics in northern Tanzania.

We know that these are incredibly trying times for both you and your business—and our goal is to support your practice with information and resources as you navigate the path to a successful future.

My best regards,

**ERINN MORGAN**  
 Editor-in-Chief  
 + Editorial Director  
*The OD Connection*  
*Corporate Optometry Today!*  
*Eyecare Business*

**75%**

A FULL 75% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS SAY THAT THEY ARE EXPECTING A "SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL IMPACT" TO THEIR BUSINESS FROM THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS.

**Want more?**  
 Check out our Facebook page: @TheODConnection

**21%**

AN ADDITIONAL 21% SAY THAT THEY ARE EXPECTING "SOME FINANCIAL IMPACT."

# To The Point

Info-packed sound bites from across the industry



## SAGE CAREER ADVICE

Stephanie Lucas, EVP and general manager of member solutions for Healthy Eyes Advantage, and a member of the Optical Women's Association (OWA), recently



**STEPHANIE LUCAS**

*EVP + general manager of member solutions, Healthy Eyes Advantage*

shared career advice with the OWA in the organization's Member Spotlight.

"Pursue your career with purpose but don't take yourself too seriously; let your personality and your passion shine through in all you do," says Lucas.

- Amid the Covid-19 crisis, the OWA is committed to supporting the health and well-being of the optical industry, offering exclusive member benefits for non-members to access throughout June.

**Learn more:**  
[opticalwomen.com](http://opticalwomen.com)

## NATIVE MISSION

Vision Source and longtime member **Moes Nasser, O.D.**, are teaming up with Optometry Giving Sight to construct two optometric clinics in northern Tanzania, scheduled to open later this year.

Dr. Nasser, a Tanzania native, has led mission trips to the country for more than a decade.



*Moes Nasser, O.D., with students near his former school in Tanzania.*

"When I return to my village, I sit under the shade of the same tree that I sat beneath as a child and am transported to the days when my father struggled to provide our family with the essentials, like food; it is easy for me to relate to the villagers," Dr. Nasser says. "Vision Source and the Brien Holden Vision Institute are helping to give back to humanity with a strong plan for their eyecare future."

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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Practices are turning to their optometric alliances and buying groups for tools amid Covid-19. HEA's **Justin L. Manning, O.D., MPH, FAAO**, shares six coping strategies.

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BY STEPHANIE K. DE LONG

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““ The Covid-19 crisis has presented everyone in the eyecare profession with a new opportunity to work together for our collective good, including eyecare businesses...””

—Justin L. Manning, O.D., MPH, FAAO



## GOOD TO KNOW

Fear and anxiety can be paralyzing, so it's important to name and label those emotions.

**T**he Covid-19 crisis has caused significant stress on practices nationwide.

And, according to **Justin L. Manning, O.D., MPH, FAAO**, executive VP of professional strategies at Healthy Eyes Advantage (HEA), "As we move forward, most independent eyecare professionals (IECPs) are faced with anxiety over reopening and how quickly business will rebound. As we focus on this phase of recovery, it is important to leverage our partnerships to achieve shared goals. Share our strengths. Support our challenges."

Here, Dr. Manning shares six key strategies in place to begin to conquer the unique challenges that lie ahead.

### STRATEGY #1 FACE FEAR.

"One of the most important psychological steps one can take during tough times like these is what's called 'fear setting,'" says Dr. Manning, referring to author and podcast host Tim Ferriss'

system that contrasts fear setting with goal setting, and stresses the importance of defining not just your goals, but your fears as well.

"Ferriss says, 'These tough times put an immense amount of fear, anxiety, and stress on the independent eyecare business owner. This can be paralyzing, so it's important to name and label those emotions. Write them down!'

"Labeling paralyzing emotions [has] been proven to 'unlock' the brain and allow [us] to start to move forward, make plans, and respond to challenges at hand."

For more from Ferriss, check out his TED Talk on this subject: [bit.ly/3fxifsv](https://bit.ly/3fxifsv).

### STRATEGY #2 CRISIS SUPPORT.

"From the outset of this crisis, HEA has responded with the philosophy 'We're all in this together,'" says Dr. Manning.

In the early weeks of the crisis, HEA provided articles on understanding the significance of

Covid-19 from a public health perspective, how to care for patients amid the pandemic, and how to nurture practices as doors started to close. A number of these steps included telehealth, promoting online contact lens sales, gift card promotions, and supporting staff from a leadership perspective.

“I have been encouraged by the number of HEA members that chose to use this down-time to work on their office flows, rework their doctor schedules, or determine how they’d implement new technology,” says Dr. Manning. “I had personal conversations with a number of our members, hearing their stories and reminding them of available resources.”

Dr. Manning shares that the company quickly recognized the financial strain this new challenge put on members and their practices.

“We were proactive in working both with our strategic partners and one-on-one with our members to provide the account support they have needed to weather these challenging times.”

### STRATEGY #3 OUTREACH.

“As Covid-related legislation was passed, we made sure our members had the resources to understand the individual bills and to apply for the PPP program as soon as possible,” shares Dr. Manning.

The company worked closely with a health care regulatory attorney to provide free legal consultation for any HEA member who wanted to take advantage of the financial resources available to them, especially through the CARES Act.

More than 1,200 members took advantage of this opportunity, a clear demonstration of how great the need was for guidance on these critical programs.

“In addition, we launched a strong partnership with EyecareLive to provide a telehealth solution in line with the [American Optometric Association]’s position on providing ongoing patient care,” he says.

“We introduced a robust Covid-19 Resource Center to connect our members with on-demand resources...”

—Justin L. Manning, O.D.,  
MPH, FAAO



### STRATEGY #4 RESOURCES.

“We introduced a robust Covid-19 Resource Center to connect our members with on-demand resources for understanding and accessing CARES Act relief measures, and provide easy access to PPE, HIPAA, and telehealth webinars and HR resources through our PEO partner, Insperity, as well as valuable tools available to HEA members from a number of our key strategic partners,” says Dr. Manning.

As COPE Temporary Rules Modification allowed live credit for courses presented in an interactive distance learning format, HEA transitioned its May 17 Ocular Symposium from an on-site CE event in Southern California to an interactive virtual format, allowing independent ECPs from across the country to participate in this opportunity to earn up to eight hours of live COPE credit.

### STRATEGY #5 RECOVERY PROGRAM.

At press time, HEA is strategically building a “Roadmap to Recovery,” highlighting steps to take in the one to two weeks before reopening and specific areas of focus for the first six to eight weeks afterward.

“For example, immediate cash flow through eyewear sales and cash-pay medical services is necessary to right the balance sheet,” says Dr. Manning. “Promotions and incentives can drive purchases. And, playing an expanded





role in population health through capturing more diabetic exams and reporting exam findings to the patient's PCP will improve HEDIS scores and Star ratings, further driving the IECP's role in the patient's holistic health care team."

The Roadmap to Recovery is available to all HEA members and can be downloaded directly from the HEA Covid-19 Resource Center.

## **STRATEGY #6** **PARTNERING TOGETHER.**

"As Henry Ford once said, 'If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.' The Covid-19 crisis has presented everyone in the eyecare profession with a new opportunity to work together for our collective good, including eyecare businesses and industry partners alike," says Dr. Manning.

As Manning notes, as HEA continues to build the next-generation marketplace, the independent eyecare professional can rest assured that they are not entering the recovery phase alone.

"We were there with resources available to our members at the beginning of the crisis, and we continue to introduce new programs and services that will give our members the opportunity to power up their practice even stronger than before," he says. "As the saying goes, necessity is the mother of invention. Those that take the opportunity to work on and respond positively to these times have the greatest chance of rebounding quickly and going on to realize unprecedented success."

# MY PATH WITH PECAA

## FRANK AULICINO, O.D.

In this regular column, *ODC* checks in with veteran O.D.s about their experience with a buying group or optometric alliance. This issue, we focus on reopening after mandatory Covid-19 closures.



**FRANK AULICINO, O.D.**  
*Vision Care Associates*

**Frank Aulicino, O.D.**, reopened his Pittsburgh, PA, practice in mid-May after closing on March 20, when the state mandated elective visits were not permissible. Vision Care Associates, which he started in 1991, is now a 4,000-square-foot, four-exam-room office in a medical plaza. Dr. Aulicino believes in doing due diligence, and that extends to his search for an optometric alliance.

—Stephanie K. De Long

### Tip #1

#### WHEN + WHY.

"I joined PECAA in June 2015. At that time there were four alliances. I did my thorough due diligence and determined that PECAA provided

### The game changer?

#### LOOK AT STAFF.

"The PECAA home office staff are what stands out the most. It's the people that truly make a business what it is."



#### GOOD TO KNOW

Professional Eye Care Associates of America (PECAA) was founded in 2006 by three independent O.D.s in Portland, OR.

the most comprehensive offering/selection of services and vendor partnerships. I maintain that perception today."

### Tip #2

#### PANDEMIC PARTNERSHIP.

"PECAA has posted on the members' site a Covid-19 guide that encompasses information on finance, HR, telemedicine, communications advice, vendor support, and reopening guidance. I have also participated in Zoom meetings to connect and learn with my peers at this tough time."

### Tip #3

#### SUPERIOR SERVICES.

"PECAA's platform is built on three pillars. I have utilized and benefited from nearly every service offered."

▪ **Connect:** "Venues enabling members

to connect with each other through peer-to-peer meetings, national member events, newsletters, and more."

▪ **Build:** "Support in business operations advice, billing/coding, doctor education, staff training, human resources, marketing, workshops, and much more."

▪ **Prosper:** "A myriad of vendor partners for ophthalmic products, services, equipment, pharmaceuticals. In addition to the significant discounts with all vendor partners, many provide quarterly rebates. The savings are well above membership fees."

### Tip #4

#### COVID-19 IN MIND.

"PECAA has been instrumental in providing guidance in helping me determine how things need to operate differently as we reopen...[from] adhering to CDC guidelines for PPE to protect staff and my patients alike...[to] limiting the number of patients per hour...[and] purchasing a special unit to sanitize frames after trial."

# DID YOU KNOW?

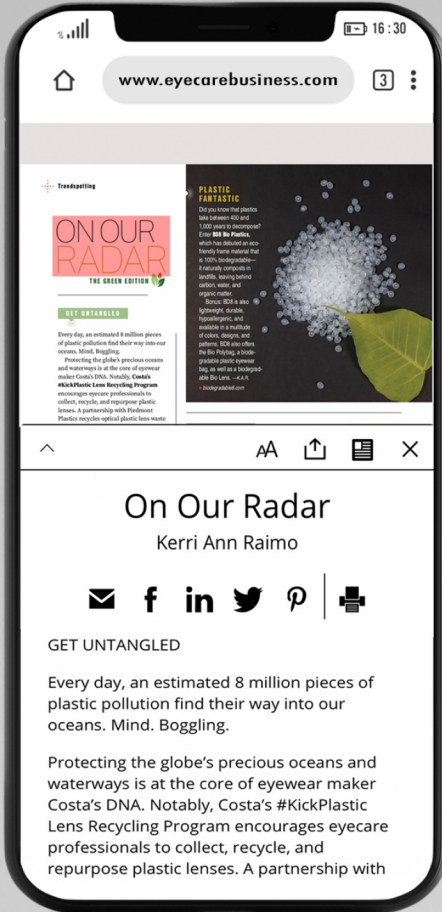
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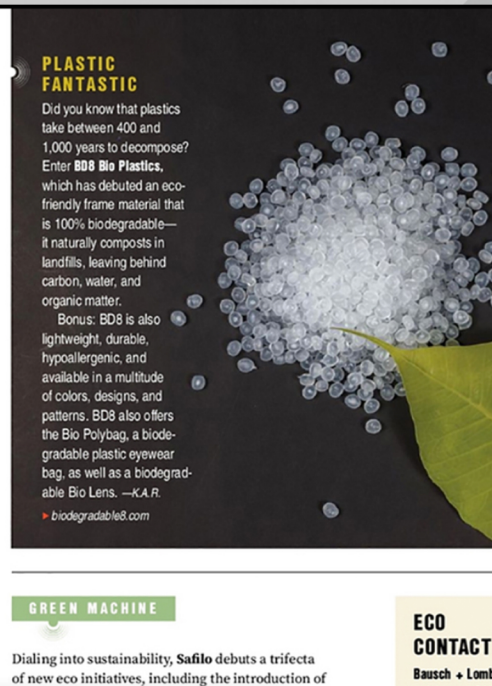
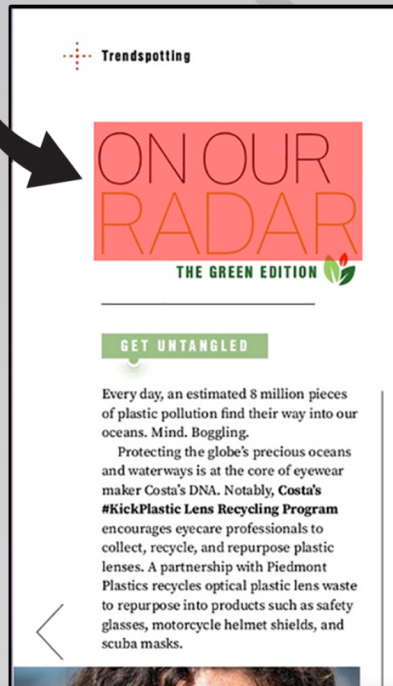
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